

## The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

### Ohio State Engineer

**Title:** The Engineer's Bookshelf

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**Issue Date:** 1941-02

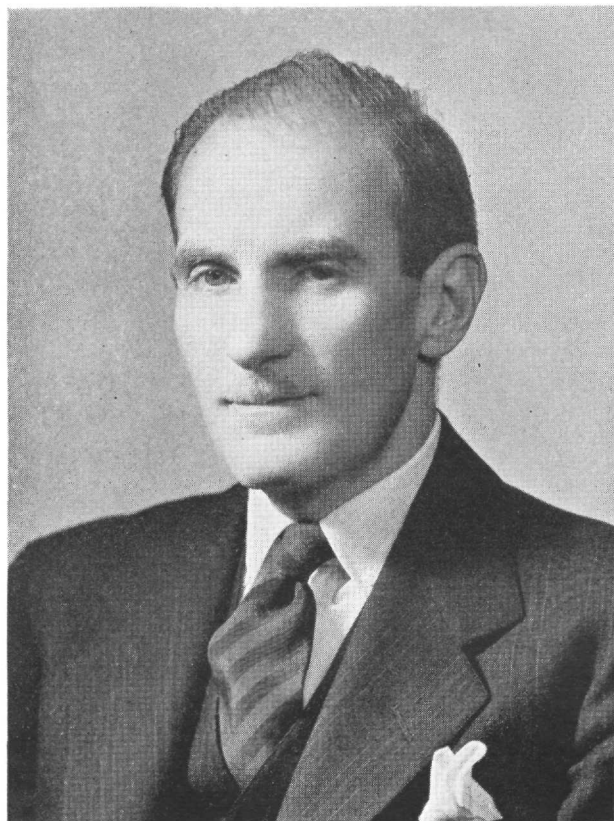
**Publisher:** Ohio State University, College of Engineering

**Citation:** Ohio State Engineer, vol. 24, no. 3 (February, 1941), 14-15.

**URI:** <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/35765>

# The Engineer's Bookshelf

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Professor Dumble

MY 50 YEARS IN ENGINEERING, by Embury A. Hitchcock in collaboration with Merrill Weed. The Caxton Printers, Ltd., Caldwell, Idaho, 1939.

I fully agree with Mr. J. M. Barnes, chief draftsman for the Philadelphia Electric Company, that "My Fifty Years in Engineering" by Dean Embury A. Hitchcock is a book that "every practicing engineer will enjoy reading and from which he will profit." Dean Hitchcock wrote his biography in collaboration with Merrill Weed, editor of the "Engineering Experiment Station News", and a former member of the staff of the Department of English on this campus. It was completed at the time of Dean Hitchcock's retirement from the College of Engineering, and presents some of the most fascinating reading that I have run across recently.

I have known Dean Hitchcock for some fifteen years, and I recall so vividly during the late Twenties lunching with him at the Faculty Club and listening to his many experiences. Since those days, and especially since I have been so closely associated with the College of Engineering through my work in the Department of English with his students, I have learned to know him better. I can truthfully say that student problems were his problems and that he

handled all those problems of "my boys", as he was accustomed to speak of the Engineering students, as if they were personal problems that might concern his own son. Dean Hitchcock has been a "human engineer", and what ever glory comes to his School will be traced, no doubt, to his untiring efforts on behalf of the students who were registered during his deanship.

His book is dedicated to "My former students and all others who served as material for some of the experiments in human engineering"; it is prefaced by a timely introduction written by Charles F. Kettering. Mr. Kettering sat as a student in Dean Hitchcock's classes during the early days of the century, and when he says that "many of his (Dean Hitchcock) students have made large contributions in various fields of engineering and science", he knows what he is talking about.

In a chapter called "A Famous Student", Dean Hitchcock relates an amusing incident:

"Kettering was skeptical of pure theory and demanded proof from experience.

"Once after Professor Caldwell had gone through a long computation in working out the characteristics of a theoretical motor, he questioned the various members of their class as to their opinion of their deduction and what it indicated. Finally he turned to Mr. Kettering.

"What do you think about it, Mr. Kettering?" he inquired.

"Kettering was serious behind his glasses.

"Well, it looks all right", he admitted, "but what I want to know is, will the thing work?"

Of particular interest to present engineering students will be the account of Dean Hitchcock's early student days at Cornell University. It is a brief of college in the Eighties:

"My account book is marked 'Expensies'. (Perhaps I made a typographical error and not a mistake in spelling.) It shows that the room for the fall term of 1886 cost only \$10.50 for the two of us.

"Our meals we took at a co-operative boarding club where according to my 'entries', the total amount I paid from September 15 to December 11 was \$33.00, or about \$2.75 a week. When occasionally the rate rose to \$3.00 a week, we all voiced our complaint to the student who was managing the enterprise."

Later on we find this:

"My expense book is interesting as a comparison of present prices to those of the late Eighties. The fee for shop work in one quarter is \$7.50, not far from present figures.

"Now and then the records show personal pleasures

long since forgotten: social 10 cents, banquet \$1.00, and milk shake 10 cents. Pain, too, must have been present, for I find in the 1887-1888 entries 'tooth pulled 50 cents'."

In a chapter called "Teaching Days," Dean Hitchcock in writing about some brewery tests tells this incident:

"It was not until a year or so later that I found out how they fooled me. Whenever I was in the room where the engines were, one or two of the students at a time would stroll casually through the door into the adjoining room as if to inspect the condenser. It seems that behind that door was a generous supply of beer. No doubt their greatest enjoyment arose from the thought they were putting something over on me. After a few years of teaching I learned that it is pretty difficult to get ahead of the students, and that they particularly enjoy putting things over on the prof."

As Dean Emeritus, Mr. Hitchcock is still about the campus. I see him frequently, and during the recent Christmas holiday I noticed him as the center of attraction of a group of gay young men and women at a campus restaurant. As I sat at my table watching their dinner progress, I was reminded of a breakfast party he asked me to attend on June 25, 1936. The place was the beautiful Union on the campus of the University of Wisconsin overlooking the shores of Lake Mendota, and the occasion was a celebration of his birthday and mine. Mr. Weed, his collaborator, Miss Harbarger of the Department of English, and her niece from South Carolina were also members of the party. We all had attended meetings of the annual convention of the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education. Over the coffee cups on that soft Wisconsin morning, apropos of something that has slipped my mind, Dean Hitchcock told a fascinating story about Robert E. Lee. It long stuck in the recesses of my memory, and I am delighted to find that he has included it in his book. Read it; you will find it on page 271.

"My Fifty Years in Engineering" smacks of all the human qualities of a good engineer, a great teacher, a kindly gentleman. Dean Hitchcock believed in himself and he believed in his work. Is it any wonder that he is a "human engineer?"

#### **There Shall Be No Night**

For years, at least since 1924, I have been paying my respects from time to time to Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Lunt when ever I chanced to be in the vicinity of their productions. Yes, it was in 1924 that I first saw them at a little theatre off Times Square. They were starring in "The Guardsman", and although not unknown to a theatre-going public, they were comparatively new to a great many people. I also recall the second time I attended one of their performances; it was a very cold and snowy evening during the Christmas holiday in 1930, and they were playing "Elizabeth

the Queen" at the National Theatre, also just off Times Square. Since then, my acquaintance with their productions has been in Columbus where they have appeared in "Reunion in Vienna", "The Taming of the Shrew", "Idiot's Delight", "The Sea Gull", and "Amphitryon 38". It has been a long acquaintance-ship, the kind that is held dear to the hearts of every one who loves the flesh-and-blood stage and goes to see famous personages time and again over a period of years.

I have always enjoyed the Lunts, and as I look back over the last ten years, I feel that there is a highlight and in some cases even two or three, in each of their performances that stands out vividly in my memory. I recall that last scene in the first act of "Elizabeth the Queen", the famous scene that brought down criticism from many and caused the dear old lady occupying the seat in front of me to turn to her equally dear old lady friend with a remark something like this: "I am so glad that they are happily married in real life". Then, there was that crashingly effective finale to "Idiot's Delight", that tantalizing prologue to "Amphitryon"; and I could go on enumerating and re-counting.

Great as I have thought the Lunts to be, I never realized just how great they were until one cold rainy December night I sat myself down at the Hartman theatre to watch them unfold the rather rakishly-written war play of Robert E. Sherwood, "There Shall Be No Night." For, although during the last thirty years I have seen great acting, I believe that on that Monday evening, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Lunt turned in the most superb jobs of acting that I have ever witnessed. Without their presence, the play would have fallen to pieces, and without their shadings the point would have been lost.

"There Shall Be No Night" concerns the adventure of a certain Finnish-American family in Helsinki between September 1938 and December 1939; concerns the Russian rape of Finland's peaceful countryside and the disintegration of the family; concerns the shifting of ideas when the death rattle of civilization sounds the passing of a more pleasant era. In a preface to the published play, Mr. Sherwood admits that it was written in record-breaking time, and that it contains some defects in structure. That is true. But, in the hands of the capable cast assembled by the Lunts, those defects disappear as if by magic, and the finished performance presents a powerful plea against the dictators.

Long may the Lunts live! For ten years they have given not only to Manhattanites but also to the provincials the very best that is being written and acted in the American theatre today. They are past masters in the art of make-believe. Long live the Lunts!

"THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT," by Robert E. Sherwood, Charles Scribner's Sons, N. Y., 1940.